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SUBJECT: U.S. VISA PROGRAM FOR CHINESE OFFICIALS NEARLY FLAWLESS

11. (SBU) Summary: Guangzhou's Fraud Prevention Unit (FPU) recently conducted a visa validation study which revealed that post's Public and Service Passport Program for Chinese officials seeking visas, better known as the "Waiban visa program," continues to function almost flawlessly. Between July 1, 2007, and September 30, 2008, post issued 8,485 nonimmigrant visas (NIVs) to Waiban applicants, i.e., Chinese official travelers. Based on a sample population of 800, post confirmed that 799 have either returned to China after their business trips or are still in status. In other words, 99.87 percent of Waiban passport holders returned to China after the completion of their official trips to the United States. As the Consular section's most visible example of our commitment to facilitate cooperation between the U.S. and Chinese governments, the Waiban visa program provides not only convenience for government and state-owned enterprise (SOE) travelers but also streamlines the adjudication process for consular officers. End summary.

BACKGROUND: A JOINT EFFORT

12. (SBU) The Chinese Foreign Affairs Office (FAO) issues diplomatic (red covered), service (green), and public affairs (brown) passports. Most of Guangzhou's Waiban clientele use public affairs or service passports. Guangzhou sees very few diplomatic passport applicants, except for the governors of the provinces or the mayor of Guangzhou. Occasionally, if the Chinese government feels that it is in their interest, they will issue public affairs passports to employees of business enterprises. For example, although not officially government workers, many high-ranking employees of SOEs or high-tax paying private companies are issued public affairs passports.

13. (SBU) FAO offices keep tight control over Waiban travel. For each application, they assess the merits of the trip and determine whether or not the traveler poses a risk for illegal immigration. They require that each traveler return their passport to the Waiban office within a certain period after the trip has concluded. Those who abuse the system run the risk of being sanctioned.

14. (SBU) Once the FAO office decides who can travel, when they will depart, and where they will go, they make the NIV application appointment for the individuals with us and deliver the service or diplomatic passports by courier. We require the FAOs to submit a diplomatic note to indicate that the government has agreed for them to use the passport. Public affairs passport holders, however, come in through the normal walk-in process. Whether or not the visa is issued, all the Waiban passports are returned directly to the FAO courier.

METHODOLOGY FOR VALIDATION STUDY

15. (U) FPU used the Consular Consolidated Database (CCD) to filter out all passports that are not service or public passports. Both public and service passports have a unique beginning letter in the applicant's passport number. The public passports begin with a "P," and the service ones begin with an "S." Most other Chinese passports start with a "G." Using the CCD, FPU pulled records of all issuances from October 1, 2007 until September 30, 2008. Post then exported all the information into a spreadsheet file. From there, using the sort function, we separated all Waiban passports. Because of the large amount of applicants, we used Excel to create a random sample of 800 applications. Post then requested Department (CA/FPP) assistance to check ADIS records for entry, exit, and any change of status for each applicant.

16. (U) Note: ADIS records are sometimes incomplete. For example, airline employees that purchase commercial planes in the United States on behalf of large enterprises and then fly them back to China are never recorded as departing the United States. ADIS revealed that forty-two travelers did not have a record of departure. FPU then made cold calls to the applicant to verify their whereabouts.

RESULT AND CONCLUSION

17. (SBU) After conducting cold calls for those travelers who were listed in ADIS as not having departed the United States, post confirmed that 99.87% of Waiban applicants returned to China after completing their trips to the United States.

18. (U) The Waiban Visa Program continues to be extremely effective.

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Foreign Affairs Offices' tight control and pre-screening ensures that travelers abide by the terms of their U.S. visa, thus enhancing the program's reputation and giving line officers the confidence to issue to such applicants.

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